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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5650
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 7279
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4647
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8555
RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5779
RUEHC/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2999
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3199
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4990
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5634
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0244
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0674
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FOR DRL ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY JONATHAN FARRAR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: APER KPAO PHUM BL

SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: FREEDOM DEFENDER NOMINEE

REF: STATE 147749

¶1. (SBU) Embassy La Paz is pleased to nominate Ana Maria Romero de Campero as our 2007 Freedom Defenders Award Nominee. From 1998-2003, Ms. Campero served as Bolivia's first Human Rights Ombudsman (Defensor del Pueblo), the independent government agency charged with defending and promoting constitutional guarantees of human rights. Ms. Campero was selected by the Bolivian Congress for her

tireless fighting in defense of human rights and democracy both during Bolivia's dictatorial regimes and after. While serving as Bolivia's Human Rights Ombudsman she was elected President of the Andean Council of Human Rights Defenders (Presidenta del Consejo Andino de Defensores del Pueblo). During her tenure as Human Rights Ombudsman, Ms. Campero was instrumental at mediating numerous civil conflicts and promoting legal cases where the Bolivian government infringed on human rights. She continues her human rights work today as director of the UNIR Foundation.

¶2. (SBU) A journalist by profession, during the dictatorships of the 1960's and 1970's, Ms Campero was an outspoken critic of the so called "defacto governments" and a strong promoter of human rights and freedom of expression. She helped found the newspaper "Apertura" (Opening), which was later closed under General Garcia Meza's dictatorship in ¶1980. She has served as President of three prestigious journalism societies: the La Paz Journalists Association, the Circle of Women Journalists and the National Press Association.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Ms. Campero has not always supported U.S. policies, specifically our anti-narcotics efforts. She has argued that the policies led to human rights violations, primarily during the forced eradication period of the Banzer administration. As Human Rights Ombudsman she promoted the civil rights of coca-growers, some of which may have injured and killed anti-narcotics forces. That said, as the Human Rights Ombudsman her role was to defend civil society from government perpetrated abuses, abuses committed by civil society against government agents is/was the role of Bolivia's Public Ministry (equivalent of the Attorney

General's Office). Ms. Campero also vocally supported and participated in a hunger-strike which led to the resignation of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. End Comment.

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